

Opioid-Related News and the Courts

Weekly Review

December 31, 2021



National

[New York jury holds drugmaker Teva liable in opioid crisis](#)

ABC News

Drugmaker Teva Pharmaceuticals contributed to the opioid crisis, a suburban New York jury ruled Thursday in one of few verdicts so far among thousands of lawsuits nationwide over the painkillers.

A separate trial will follow to determine what Teva will have to pay in the case, in which New York state and two Long Island counties took on a swath of drug companies.

In Thursday's verdict, a Suffolk County jury found the drug company played a role in what is legally termed a public nuisance but had lethal consequences — an opioid use epidemic linked to more than 500,000 deaths in the U.S. in the past two decades.

National

[The Opioid Crisis in 2021: Benchmark Legal Decisions & Deaths](#)

PBS

[Michael Barnett, an assistant professor of health policy management at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health] and others said the pandemic has only made it harder to address the opioid crisis. People need access to treatment and safe injection sites, as well as avenues of social support that many were cut off from by COVID-19, said Silvia Martins, associate professor of epidemiology at the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health.

Beyond pandemic-induced hardship, Martins said there are “structural changes that need to happen,” like stable housing and access to employment for those with substance-use problems.

Opioid-Related News and the Courts Weekly Review: December 31, 2021

National

Program Assists Substance-Exposed Infants, Their Caregivers

Associated Press

On the outpatient side, Hushabye [Nursery] has a licensed marriage and family therapist and two case managers. One case manager focuses specifically on helping families navigate interactions with the Arizona Department of Child Safety. Sometimes, [Tara] Sundem said, families, are so stressed that they don't really hear what DCS is saying they need to do.

"Sometimes it's because they're not healthy, but sometimes it's just because it's so stressful," Sundem said. "And sometimes, they speak a completely different language."

That was [Clarissa] Collins' experience after the birth of her first child.

"I had no clue what the hell I was doing back then," she said. "I went through DCS; I went to court; I did all of that. I tried going to treatment, but I had no clue what I was doing. I was physically present, but I had no clue what was going on."

California

California invests millions to try and curtail drug overdoses

Marketplace

Medically assisted treatment is a key California Bridge approach and part of a statewide push to make it more widely available.

"It lowers mortality risk by about 50%," said Monish Ullal, an internal medicine doctor at Highland and a substance abuse expert. "There's very little in medicine that has that big of an impact on a person's chances of dying."

Studies show that patients who receive opioid meds in the ER are twice as likely to remain in treatment a month later compared to someone who doesn't. But only about 20% of ER doctors in the U.S. are trained to dispense them.

Some patients and doctors are skeptical about an opioid alternative.

Indiana

The leading cause of death for new moms isn't delivery complications. It's substance abuse.

IndyStar

Typically, this medically assisted treatment is through medications such as methadone — synthetic narcotics administered in a way to decrease reliance and help patients through addiction treatment. During this time, staff members also help mothers sign up for Medicaid as well as find transportation and housing.

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All in all, [Christine Cooper, who leads a substance use treatment program at Clark Memorial Hospital in Jeffersonville, Indiana] said she's treated more than 25 women in the program.

One of the biggest impacts she's seen in that time, she said, has been how the program helps babies born with neonatal abstinence syndrome, a condition where the mother has substance use disorder.

North Carolina

[Experts back medically-assisted treatment for opioid abuse, but some disagree, including New Hanover County's new treatment facility](#)

WHQR

Tufanna Bradley, assistant county manager and the staff liaison for The Healing Place of New Hanover County, responded to questions about not allowing MAT by noting that treatment at the facility is 'voluntary.'

However, Bradley said, "If they go through the judicial system a judge could put that as part of their release. But the facility itself does not make it a requirement. Anyone could walk off the street and say, 'I've been battling substance abuse, and I want to seek assistance.'"

Bradley added, "This is just another option for individuals who are dealing with substance abuse and want to try again at their sobriety."

Pennsylvania

[Allegheny County Mental Health Court program marks 20th anniversary, graduation](#)

TribLive

Timothy Treganowan, who has been diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder, became addicted to heroin at age 27 after he broke his back and was prescribed opioids.

In 2017, while incarcerated for burglary and receiving stolen property — crimes committed, he said, to fuel his habit — Treganowan qualified for a spot in Allegheny County's Mental Health Court.

Tennessee

["I want people to know that no matter how deep you get, there is a way out"](#)

Times-News

"The stigma and shame for asking for help and getting medically assisted treatment stopped us from getting the help and treatment we needed," [Michelle] Donaldson said.

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“The day before (Zach) overdosed, he called the clinic to see about getting us in and getting help.”

According to the Tennessee Department of Health, 3,032 Tennesseans died of a drug overdose in 2020, representing a 45% increase from 2019. Opioids have consistently played a role in drug overdose deaths in the state and were involved in 79% of overdose deaths in 2020.

Sullivan County had 60 overdose deaths in 2020, with 45 of those being attributed to opioids.

Virginia

[Page County Sheriff introduces program to combat opioid addiction](#)

WHSV

Sheriff Cubbage says the mission of the Page County Jail Medically Assisted Treatment (MAT) Reentry Program is to empower individuals, families and the community to advance beyond addiction and overcome barriers through healing.

“We respect each individual’s unique journey through recovery and believe the disease of addiction is both preventable and treatable,” said Sheriff Cubbage.

Program participants will be able to meet with a licensed treatment provider and certified peer recovery specialist, either in person or through telehealth. Groups will also be available for participants, including self-management, recovery training, anger management and active parenting.